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The early learning experiences of off-reserve First Nations children in Canada

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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
p	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

The Early Learning Experiences of Off-reserve First Nations Children in Canada

Young First Nations children living off reserve have the opportunity to learn in different places and with different people. This fact sheet describes the early learning experiences of 2- to 5-year-old First Nations children living off-reserve in Canada, using data from the 2006 Aboriginal Children's Survey.

Young First Nations children in Canada

First Nations children are a growing proportion among all children in Canada, particularly in some western provinces (Manitoba and Saskatchewan) and in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. In 2006, the Census enumerated about 47,000 First Nations children under the age of six living off reserve across Canada, 67% of whom were registered or Treaty Indians.

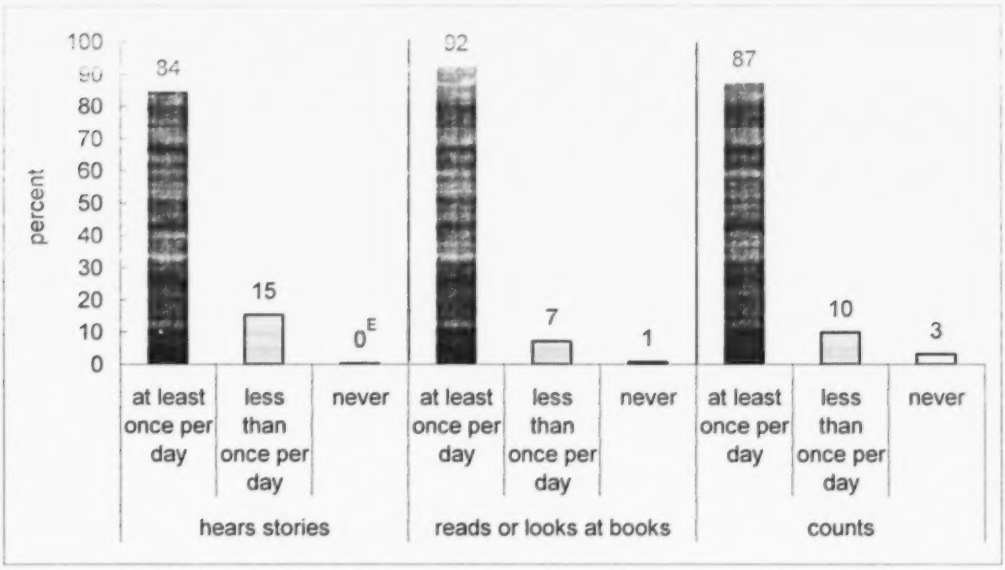
➢ In what ways do children learn about words?

Hearing stories, reading books and counting can help children learn about words, language, and culture (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006a).

- Nine out of 10 2- to 5-year-old First Nations children living off reserve read or look at books at least once a day. More than four out of five hear stories at least once a day. A very high percentage (87%) count every day.

- 98% of off-reserve First Nations children do at least one of these activities daily. Three out of four children (74%) participate in all three of these activities daily. Only 2% do none of these activities on a daily basis.

Chart 1
The majority of First Nations children aged 2 to 5 living off reserve hear stories, read books, and count once a day or more



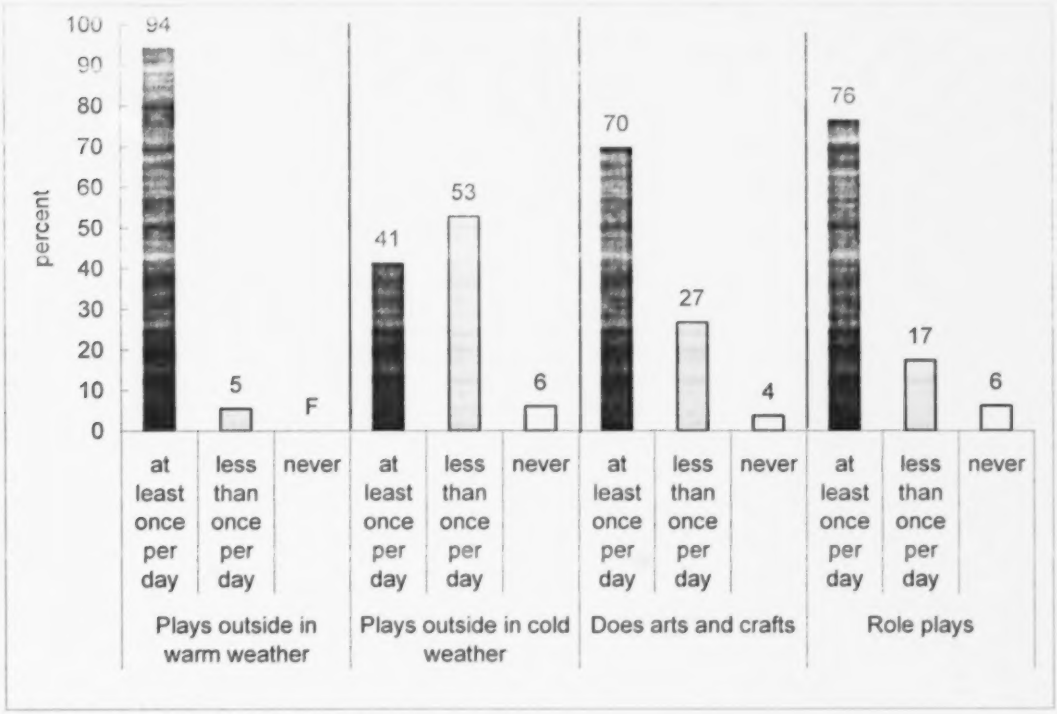
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

➢ What is the play environment for off-reserve First Nation children?

Play is an important part of children's learning because it helps them to develop social, physical, and emotional skills (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006b). Both outdoor play and creative play (such as arts and crafts and pretend play) can have a positive impact on children's physical and mental well-being.

- The majority of young First Nations children living off reserve play outside every day in warm weather (94%). About two out of five play outside every day in cold weather, while another half of children play outside less than once a day in cold weather.
- Seven out of 10 off-reserve First Nations 2- to 5- year old children do arts and crafts every day and three out of four participate in role playing games (pretend play like playing house or school) every day.
- 98% of First Nations children living off reserve do at least one of these activities daily (play outside in either warm or cold weather, arts and crafts, role playing games). Half do all of these activities at least once a day, and only 2% do none of these play activities daily.

Chart 2
Almost all First Nations children aged 2 to 5 living off reserve play outside everyday in warm weather; three out of four engage in creative play daily



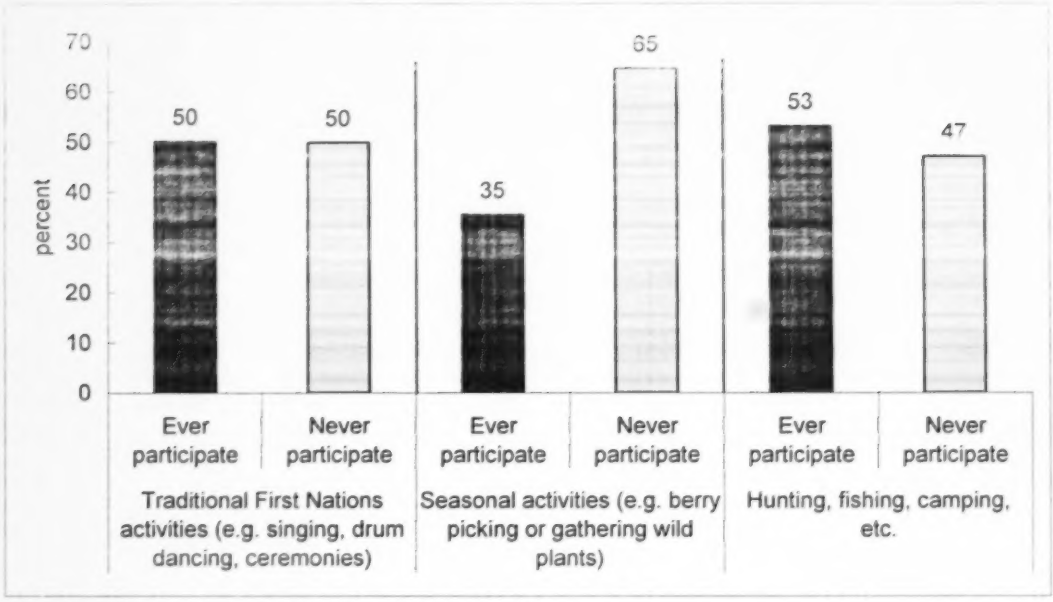
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

➢ How many children participate in traditional activities?

Young First Nations children living off reserve can learn about their culture from participating in traditional and seasonal activities.

- About half of off-reserve First Nations children participate in traditional activities such as singing, drum dancing, or traditional ceremonies. About half of off-reserve First Nations children go hunting, fishing, or camping.
- About one in three First Nations children living off reserve participates in seasonal activities such as berry picking or gathering wild plants.
- Three out of four off-reserve First Nations children participate in at least one of the three activities, 18% participate in all three activities. However, 23% do not participate in any traditional or seasonal activities.

Chart 3
About half of First Nations children under six years old living off-reserve participate in traditional activities



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

➢ Who helps children learn?

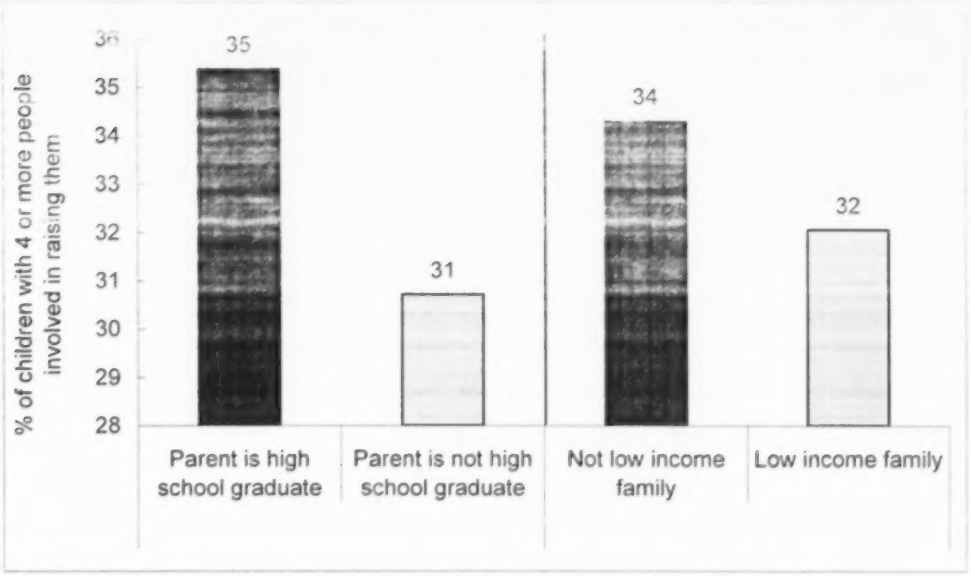
- Many people are involved in raising First Nations children living off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2008b). One third of off-reserve First Nations children are raised by four or more people. The majority of the time, this includes the mother (94% of children) and father (72% of children). It also often includes a grandparent (44% of children), other relative (28% or children) or non-relative (18% of children).

- The percentage of off-reserve First Nations children with four or more people raising them was slightly higher for children with parents who have graduated from high school compared with those whose parents were non-graduates.

- Two out of five off-reserve First Nations children were living with a lone parent. The percentage of children with four or more people raising them was not different for children living with a lone parent compared to children living with two parents.

- About half of off-reserve First Nations children have someone to help them understand First Nations culture and history. This person is usually a parent or grandparent, but sometimes is an aunt or uncle, or a teacher or child care provider.

Chart 4
First Nations children under six years old living off reserve are more likely to have four or more people involved in raising them if they have parents who are high school graduates



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

➢ Where do children learn?

Many children are also involved in learning experiences outside of the home.

- About 14% of young off-reserve First Nations children attend child and parent programs (like 'Moms & Tots', 'The Dad Program', or 'Mother Goose').
- Eight out of 10 4- and 5-year-old First Nations children living off reserve are in school.
- As well, some children participate in child care. About half of 2- to 5- year old off-reserve First Nations children attend child care. For children attending child care, the most common main type of arrangement is a daycare centre.

- Is participation in early learning activities related to parent education, family income, and having a lone parent?

Parents' education

- Young off-reserve First Nations children of high school graduates are more likely than children of non-graduates to participate in language and play activities on a daily basis. About 77% of children of high school graduates hear stories, read or look at books, and count at least once a day, compared to 67% of children of non-high school graduates.

- Similarly, 60% of off-reserve First Nations children of high school graduates do all three play activities at least once a day (play outside, do arts and crafts and role play), compared to 48% of off-reserve First Nations children of non-graduates.

Income

- First Nations children living off reserve in low income families are less likely to participate in language and play activities than First Nations children living off-reserve in higher income families.

- Off-reserve First Nations children in low income families are more likely to have participated in traditional activities like singing and dancing, but less likely to have gone hunting, fishing or camping than off-reserve First Nations children from higher income families.

Lone parent

- There are no differences in participation in language and play activities for off-reserve First Nations children living with a lone parent compared to children living with two parents.

- Off-reserve First Nations children living with a lone parent are more likely to have participated in traditional activities like singing or dancing, but less likely to have participated in seasonal activities and less likely to have gone hunting, fishing, or camping compared to children living with two parents.

What you should know about this fact sheet

The Aboriginal Children's Survey was developed by Statistics Canada and Aboriginal advisors from across the country and was conducted jointly with Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The survey took place between October 2006 and March 2007. Parents or guardians of approximately 10,500 Aboriginal children under six years of age, including more than 5,100 First Nations children, provided information through a combination of personal and telephone interviews. The overall response rate for the survey was 81.1%.

The Aboriginal Children's Survey includes First Nations children living off-reserve in the provinces and all First Nations children living in the territories.

For this survey, the parent or guardian responded on behalf of the child. For the majority of off-reserve First Nations children (89%), this person was the birth mother or father. Grandparents, foster parents, and adoptive parents made up the majority of the remaining parents or guardians who responded to the survey for off-reserve First Nations children.

In this fact sheet, 'First Nations children' include children whose parents or guardians identified them as First Nations children on the Aboriginal Children's Survey in response to the question: 'Is (child) an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuk?' Please note that children were identified as 'North American Indian'; however the term 'First Nations' is used in this fact sheet. First Nations children include those who were identified as First Nations only and those identified as First Nations in combination with another Aboriginal group, either Métis or Inuit.

For more detailed information on the survey, please consult the *Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006: Concepts and Methods Guide* (Statistics Canada catalogue number 89-634).

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